

Resources Secretary Says Bay-Delta Accord to be Extended

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BURBANK, Calif.-- State and federal regulators plan tomorrow to extend an historic accord that ushered in a truce in the water wars in California's Bay-Delta.

Resources Secretary Doug Wheeler announced the extension today at the Association of California Water Agencies' (ACWA) briefing: ``What's the Bottom Line for the Bay-Delta?"

``We will sign tomorrow and see that (the Accord) will be extended another year," Wheeler told the crowd of about 200 California water leaders, city and county officials, and business leaders.

In what is likely his last major speech before he leaves office as Governor Pete Wilson's appointee, Wheeler outlined what he believes should be the focus of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program as the joint state-federal effort continues to find solutions for the water quality, water supply and environmental problems in the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento San Joaquin River Delta.

According to Wheeler, four issues have yet to be adequately addressed by CALFED:

- CALFED has assumed too quickly that California doesn't need a canal around the Delta.
- CALFED needs to look at new ways in which the capital for facilities is provided, including possibly raising it from private sources.
- CALFED needs to adequately address the issue of watershed equity, ensuring that Northern California water interests reap benefits for managing the state's watersheds.
- CALFED must fuel the integration of the state's two major water projects -- the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project.

Wheeler also warned CALFED that it must not let ``process" become more important than product.

``Resist the temptation to become the state's water czar and get on with the business at hand," he told CALFED Executive Director Lester Snow. ``Now is the time to roll up our sleeves and get this job done."

ACWA Executive Director Steve Hall told the group that during his eight years in office, Wheeler has redefined the role of Resources Secretary and turned it into a policy-driving position. Hall praised Wheeler for the progress that has been made to solve the water problems in the state.

``He was the right man at the right time for California water," Hall said.

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